

Sixty-Three Years of Home History

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SIXTY-THREE YEARS OF HOME HISTORY.

When the Davenport Public library is thrown open to the people—in a year or more from the present time, as we all hope—it will contain records of great value; records which if lost through burning or otherwise it would be impossible to duplicate; and records which will have cost the board of trustees nothing. It is pardonable to say that the store-house of local history which is to be ready the day the library is opened to visitors, is one to be found in no other similar institution in the State of Iowa.

Because there is to be a safe place to keep them, and because the calls for their use are more and more frequent on the part of the public, The Democrat Company has turned over to the library trustees a full set of bound volumes of this paper from the first issue. This statement does not simply mean that the files of this paper are to be at the service of all who desire to use them, but that the files of several other papers are to be within easy access. It represents news publications that were in existence before its birth, and others that were for many years contemporary with it. And so the long period of time is completely covered. It begins with a single weekly and develops into a Democratic evening paper, and a Republican morning paper, both recording the history of Davenport, of Scott county, of Iowa, and of the country at large, which cannot be found elsewhere.

The Democrat Company has formally tendered to the library trustees this mass of written and bound records, treasures that money would not buy, and could not elsewhere be obtained. And the board accepted the trust, depositing the loads of files for the time being in one of the large vaults at the court house. From that secure resting-place the acres of printed pages, representing the lives of many workmen, will be transferred to the library building as soon as that structure is ready. And there in regular order the history of all that has happened for sixty-three years can be referred to as often as desired.

To begin at the beginning. *The Iowa Sun and The Davenport and Rock Island News*—a long name for a short paper—made its appearance on the 15th day of August, 1838. The type was set, the paper worked off on the press by the Logan family, father and sons. The first paper was 22 by 32 inches in size, four pages of six columns each. In politics *The Sun* was Democratic. Martin Van Buren was president. The whole territory of Iowa had then a population of less than 43,112, the figures given being those of the national census of 1840. Scott county then had a population of only 2,140, as against 51,558 on the 1st of June last. There was no railroad west of Chicago, no telegraph, no bridge over the Mississippi. There was not even a town of Rock Island then, the place we now call by that name being known as Stephenson. The Rock Island part of the paper's headline was for the benefit of the island that is now the site of the national arsenal. In those days it required from four to six weeks for the "news" to get here from the eastern cities. For want of support *The Sun* failed to shine in 1842, and the types and press were taken to Buffalo, Scott county, Iowa, where the publication was continued under the names of *The Bride and the Lamb's Wife*, later *The Ensign*.

The second newspaper founded here was *The Davenport Gazette*, by Alfred Sanders and Levi Davis, the first issue appearing on the 26th of August, 1841. It was a weekly, and of the Whig political faith. In 1853, on the 3d of September, it became a tri-weekly; and on the 11th of October, 1854, a daily. Not stopping to mention all the many changes that occurred, it may be said that *The Gazette* continued to appear until the 13th of April, 1887, when it became a part of *The Davenport Democrat* by purchase and absorption. All the files of this paper for forty-six years are included, with many issues of the earlier *Sun* in the volumes that are to go into the new library.

The third newspaper that was planted here was a seven-column weekly named *The Democratic Banner*. It appeared

in September, 1848. *The Banner* was continued until the close of its seventh volume, on the 12th of October, 1855, when it was sold to J. T. Hildreth, D. N. Richardson and G. R. West. They changed the name of the paper to *The Iowa State Democrat*. On the 11th of October, 1859, *The Democrat* united its life with that of *The Daily Morning News*, a Democratic paper that was established three years previously. On the 11th of May, 1863, the property came into the hands of the Richardson Brothers, where it has since remained. The daily was changed from a morning to an evening paper on the 27th of April, 1863. For several years after *The Gazette* came to this office, both evening and morning editions were printed.

But it is not the purpose of this article to give the history of Davenport newspapers, or of those who have been connected with them during this long period of three score and three years. The object is merely to state that all the history made, at least, locally, during this period of wonderful change, has been written in the files that it gives *The Davenport Democrat* so much pleasure to turn over to the trustees of the Davenport Public Library.

There is no doubt but others will place with the trustees for safe-keeping and for the use of all interested, many articles of historic value, printed and otherwise. In this way the library may become literally a treasure house. There are in the county many documents and books which the owners will be glad to place where they are certain to be preserved.—*Davenport Democrat*, April 21, 1901.

OUR RIVER TRADE.—This still keeps brisk. St. Louis boats are arriving and departing daily, with excellent trips up and down. We note many passengers going down from up river towns. Heavy goods are constantly arriving.—*Dubuque Express and Herald*, Nov. 12, 1858.

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